



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

SMITH

- An inquiry into the
functions of the

brain - the nature and
purpose of the
moral sense - 1897

269.10



47. 969.10

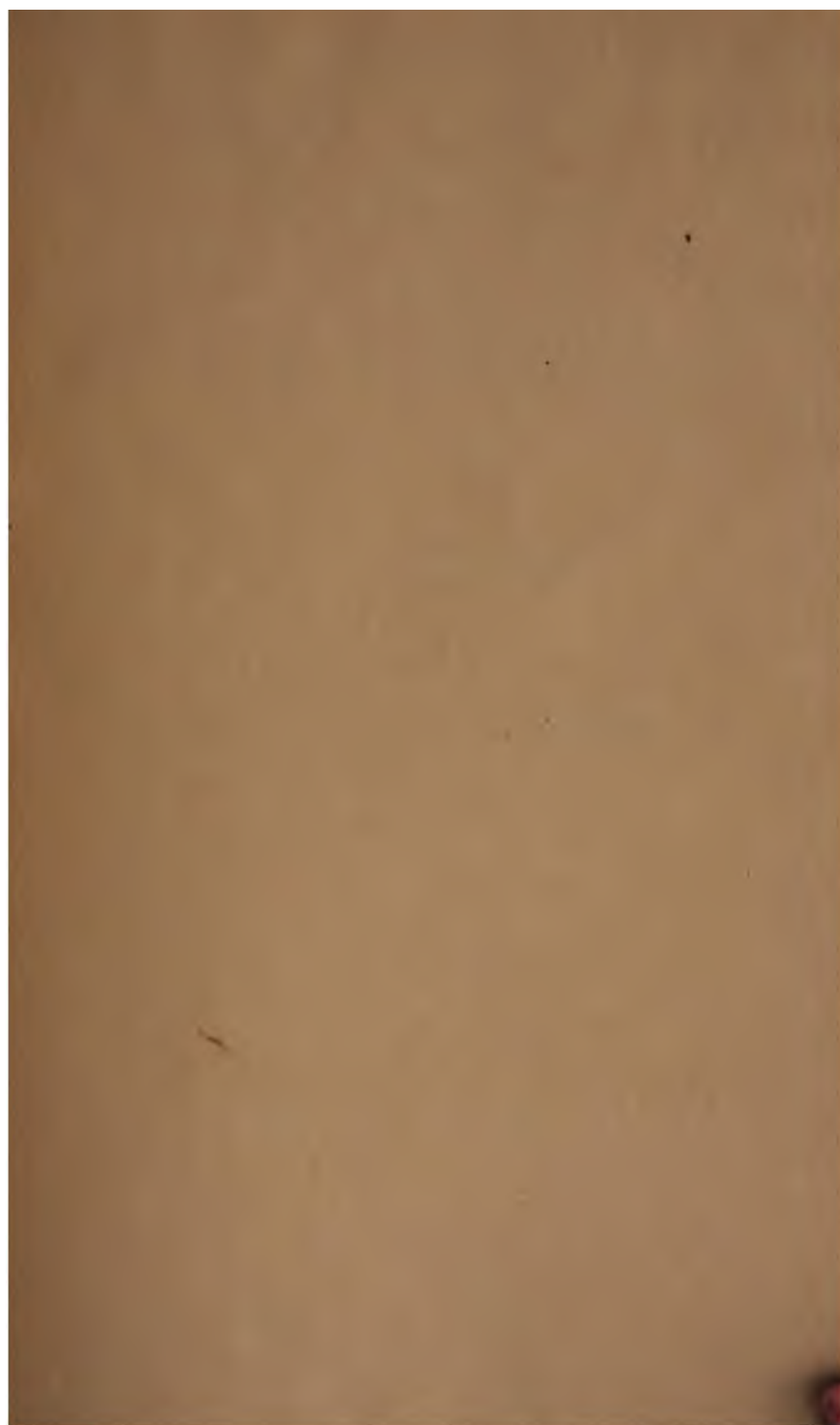
HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY



THE GIFT OF
FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY
OF SWARTHMORE COLLEGE



SWARTHMORE, PENNSYLVANIA





AN INQUIRY

INTO

THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS

OF THE

M O R A L S E N S E :

BEING

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED TO

THE SENIOR CLASS OF LAVERFORD SCHOOL,

ON THE TWELFTH OF NINTH MONTH, 1837.

BY DANIEL B. SMITH.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE MANAGERS.

PHILADELPHIA:

JOSEPH RAKESTRAW, PRINTER.

.....

1837.

C 8347.969.10

✓

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY
GIFT OF
FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
FEB 7 1935

E

AN ADDRESS, &c.

YOUNG MEN OF THE SENIOR CLASS:—

I am desirous on this last occasion of my official intercourse with you, of presenting to you, in a more connected form than I have heretofore been able to do, some views on one of the great divisions of your studies, which I think important, and of which a portion may not be altogether destitute of novelty. They have, it is true, been not unfrequently brought before you; but having been delivered in the shape of occasional and desultory comments upon the books we have examined together, they may not have presented that weight of evidence and that commanding interest, which I conceive to belong to them, and in which I hope to be able to array them.

Perhaps I shall not mistake your feelings, if I flatter myself, that the solemnity of this scene, and the conflicting emotions which must swell your bosoms as you take a final leave of these peaceful academic shades, will dispose you to listen with a willing ear, and to attend with softened hearts, to the parting admonitions and instructions of him, at whose side you have explored the moral and intellectual world, around and within you.

It is at a moment like this, when you are leaving the verdant shores for the stormy deeps of life; when the future in all its uncertainty and darkness, presses like a weight upon your hearts; when familiar, and well-tried and dearly-prized enjoyments are taking their flight, and all before you in the busy

world is strange and uncongenial to your minds—it is at such a moment, that a sense of the stern realities of life comes over the spirit with a shuddering pang, and that we feel, perhaps for the first time—certainly with more force than ever before—the responsibilities of existence. It is therefore, that I am the more anxious to impress upon you in this state of your feelings, certain truths, which lie, as I conceive, at the foundation of morality and religion.

You are familiar with the mode in which the history of the origin and progress of our knowledge of the external world is illustrated, by the supposed example of a human being endowed with but a single sense. We will suppose this sense to be the blended one, of touch and the muscular power; it being to this that we owe our notions of what are called the primary qualities of matter. As the mind is awakened to thought by impressions upon the bodily organs, the first act of consciousness of this being, would probably be an uneasy sensation in some of his limbs, and an instinctive motion to relieve that uneasiness. He would thus gain the knowledge of his power over his limbs, and the pleasure of the sensation caused by their motion, would prompt him to repeat it in every variety of manner. Each change of position in a limb, in the fingers and thumb, for example, being accompanied by a change of sensation, would in fact give rise to a continuous series of sensations; but one of which can be present, while the preceding ones are objects of memory, and are remembered as following in a certain order. This succession of feelings constitutes our notion of *time*. There is, moreover, a distinct consciousness of the volition to move the limb, and of the consequent motion as the effect of that volition. This consciousness of power, as the cause of certain effects, is a subject of individual experience—one of those simple and universally understood ideas, which any attempt at definition does but perplex and confuse.

If this imaginary being were placed within reach of an immoveable object, as the wall of a room, he would find in extending his arm, that there was an interruption to the accustomed series of muscular feelings, and that no force he was

capable of exerting could complete it, or, in other words, overcome the resistance offered to those efforts. If he could now walk about the room, his whole time would probably be spent in a series of experiments on these new phenomena. He would soon learn to distinguish the various degrees of magnitude and kinds of figure; that is, the various directions in which this resistance to his muscular efforts presented itself, and hardness and softness, or the several sensations accompanying the various degrees of that resistance. He would thus become acquainted with what are termed the primary qualities of matter. All these various sensations are clearly feelings of the mind, and, as such, can bear no resemblance to matter, nor furnish any conception of what it actually is. Yet it is impossible for us to resist the conviction, that the common and unknown cause of these sensations, which, while it resists our greatest muscular force in one direction, and is therefore solid, presents this resistance at a series of continuous points, and is therefore extended—has an independent and separate existence.

If this imaginary individual were to be endued with only the sense of hearing, his consciousness would, in the same manner, be first awakened by a sound; and although he would soon learn that this feeling was not renewable at will, and would therefore attribute it to some cause distinct from himself, it would convey to him no notion whatever of the nature of that separate existence, and would be only a certain feeling, different in kind from his other feelings and thoughts, and not within his own control. If it were possible for an individual thus slenderly gifted with the means of communication with the external world, to frame systems of philosophy, the nature and cause of this sensation would probably be the great stumbling block in his way; and the tendency of his theories would, in all probability, be to class it as a mere species, or perhaps variety, of reflection or consciousness, and to overlook those faint, but still originally distinct characteristics, which separate it so widely from all his other states of consciousness.

In the same manner it may be shown, that neither taste, nor smell, nor sight, can, singly and unassistedly, convey to us any

clear information of the external world. All that they could inform us of would be, that there were causes beyond our control, which produced in the mind certain peculiar sensations. It is the co-existence of these various sensations that gradually enables us to refer them to their common source—to pronounce that the cause of that peculiar modification of resistance to our muscular efforts, which gives us the notion of globular form, is also the cause of that peculiar sensation of sight, which we call an orange-colour; of that sensation of the organ of taste, in which what we call sweet and sour are gratefully blended; of a sensation of the organ of smell that is peculiarly aromatic. The common cause of all these various co-existing sensations, we call an orange; but we know absolutely nothing respecting it, except from these sensations. What is true of this single object, is true of all others. The whole physical creation around us, exists *as to us* only as mental phenomena, and owes all its beauty and its grandeur to the drapery borrowed from the wardrobe of the intellectual world.

To whatever part of our mental structure we turn, we find, as we do in physics, that our investigations are at length arrested by an impassable barrier, at which knowledge must give place to faith, in a manner for which we can assign no other cause, than that such has been the will of the Author of nature. We are endowed with instinctive principles of belief and of action, implanted in us by the great Preserver of men, on which we act, almost unconsciously, with undoubting confidence, and which reason is baffled in all her attempts to analyze.

The being thus sent forth upon so magnificent a theatre of wonders, is endowed with capacities adjusted with consummate skill to the scene upon which he is called to act. He is furnished with conservative and impelling instincts of passion and desire, whose operation, like the play of the lungs and of the heart, is not entrusted to his caprice or forgetfulness, but is in a great measure independent of the will. The inferior animals, that implicitly obey the dictates of these instincts, and whose brute unconscious gaze is insensible to the light that irradiates the moral world, find in them a competent guide through the neces-

sities and perils of their existence. Man, who can explore their tendencies and effects, and over whose higher intellectual nature they are apt to gain an undue ascendancy, checks them in that pursuit of their own gratification which is the end of their impulses, when he perceives that its attainment would bring with it more ultimate pain than pleasure—greater evils than advantages. The compensation which reason thus establishes among our instinctive impulses, gives rise to a code of subordinate morals, or rather of interests, which restrains the appetites within wholesome limits, and is not merely sufficient for the preservation, but advances the physical prosperity of the race, and maintains a certain degree of social order and happiness.

These original elements of our nature, also become the sources of other derived and secondary principles of action. We transfer to the means necessary for obtaining the objects of any of our desires, the desire itself. As money, for example, has become the common medium of exchange, it may be regarded as the representative of all the various objects of desire which the industry of man can obtain. Hence it is, that the wish for these various kinds of gratification, gives rise to the desire for money. It thus becomes the representative of all those other desires which money is able to gratify, and soon transmutes them all into one insatiable thirst—the avarice of gold. In the eagerness of our pursuit after this means, we forget that it is only as a means, and not as an end, that it has any intrinsic value; we altogether lose sight of the original object of desire, and impose the most severe restraints upon the very impulses which originally urged us to the pursuit. It is thus also, that ambition, honour, and the pride of family—passions that have reference to an artificial state of society, and are therefore themselves artificial—are called into existence and gain the mastery over all the other passions.

The manner in which the individual character is thus formed, constitutes one of the most copious and instructive of themes; so powerfully do accident and circumstance influence, and so greatly do they diversify the common features of our nature.

These laws influence, not only our active principles, but our

tastes and opinions. The emotions of pleasure which agreeable colours—which warmth and softness—which fragrance and harmony severally inspire, blend into one complex feeling of the beautiful, which communicates its own delightful glow to whatever object, how indifferent soever in itself, has been often or strongly associated with it, and which seems almost like a new sense; so refined are its enjoyments and so exquisite do its sensibilities become. It mingles with all that can inspire delight throughout the physical and intellectual world, and throws a softening lustre over the whole character, both of individuals and of nations.

If we turn from the contemplation of his social and intellectual, to that of his moral nature, we shall find that there, also, man is endowed with faculties exquisitely adapted to the exigencies of his condition, and that all his wants are provided for, by the same omniscient Skill which inspires the bee and the ant with unconscious wisdom.

Strange indeed would it have been, if the Creator, while so bountifully endowing us with the powers which belong to the lower part of our nature, had left all that most exalts it, to the influence of accident, or of ignobler and subordinate faculties.

When we view human nature merely in relation to its propensities and passions, its appetites and desires, we can discern no restraining principle to influence them, beyond the sense of the inconvenience that arises from their mutual interference; no motives to action of superior morality to the dictates of interest; nothing, in short, to which the mere addition of the powers of abstraction and generalization would not elevate the brute creation.

When, however, we take into thought the relations of man to the invisible world—to the Creator and Sustainer of all that we behold, we perceive the necessity of other principles of action, and arrive at the knowledge of feelings altogether different from any that we have been considering.

And first and chief—our knowledge of that Almighty Being has not been left to the uncertain and capricious determination of our will, but has its foundations in capacities co-extensive

with the human family, and coeval with the dawn of intellect. The tracing, then, of the origin of this knowledge, becomes the most important of philosophical inquiries, and will be found to conduct us to the first principles of all morality and religion.

The child, untaught to control his passions—ignorant as yet of the rights of property, and of the propriety of conventional usages, seeks only to obtain the objects of his desires, and appropriates to himself whatever will gratify his inclinations. At a certain stage in this career of self-gratification, he is met by a series of feelings altogether unlike any of those which are excited by his inherent propensities. They are feelings which check him in his course; which oppress him with hesitation and anxiety; which tend to compel him to act in a certain manner; which convey to him, for the first time, the notion of right and wrong.

This sense of right, is a consciousness of approbation; the sense of wrong, a consciousness of disapprobation: and there arises, inseparable in its very nature from the accompanying consciousness, a feeling of happiness and serenity with the former, and of uneasiness and alarm with the latter. Approbation and disapprobation being relative terms, imply an approver and a disapprover. For the action thus felt to be wrong, we feel that we have incurred censure and deserve punishment; feelings which involve a consciousness of the existence and authority of a moral Judge, and to which may be traced the origin of our conviction that there is a Supreme Governor of the world.

I have already spoken of that distinct consciousness of power which accompanies the act of volition. As that act is invariably followed by the thing willed, there comes to be established in the mind, between any two events that invariably accompany each other, the same relation which exists between the mental volition and the bodily action. Such appears to me to be the simple statement of the origin of our notion of physical cause and effect. We anticipate, in pursuance of the well-known laws of suggestion, the concurring return of the phenomena which have once co-existed; we expect it in the same order of

sequence which we before witnessed, and we have a vague feeling of a potentiality in the first to produce the second. This conviction of the necessity of a power being placed somewhere, adequate to effect all the changes which we witness, can never be eradicated from our minds.

It needs but a slight developement of the faculties to convince us that these changes are a mere series of effects, the producing cause of which is veiled from our senses. But still, whether we make this discovery or not, the conviction of the necessity of power—of the real existence of a cause for every effect, remains, and grows with the growth of our experience. At a very early period, likewise, in the developement of our moral nature, do the two conceptions of a moral Judge and of a Power or Cause coalesce. In the matured state of his faculties, the accountable and rational man cannot divest himself of them, or separate them; although when he views them in any other light than as First Truths in morals, he may perplex himself with subtle and interminable speculations as to their nature, and even as to their reality.

There cannot be given a more impressive instance of the vast difference between man and man—between the human mind in its natural darkness, and the same mind enlightened by revelation—than is furnished by the different states in which this idea of the Supreme Being exists in different intellects.

The least intelligent individual of the rude tribes of Papuan savages, is not without his convictions of right and wrong; his scanty code of morals; his vague, mysterious impressions of awe and solemnity, inspired, he knows not how nor wherefore, in some hour of solitary meditation amidst the depth of gloomy forests, or by the roar of the cataract—in the tranquil beauty of the vast savanna, or by the shore of the boundless ocean. Unable to clothe his rude conceptions in language—resigned to the dominion of fierce and sullen passions, of coarse and sensual pleasures, the savage invests some object of sense—a rudely-carved image, the sun, the moon, the air, the tempest or the ocean, with those attributes of power which he instinct-

ively feels to exist, but of the real character of which, both his moral and intellectual powers are too feeble to inform him.

Yet it is these perceptions of right and wrong in actions, or, in other words, this conviction that there is a moral Judge—these universally felt impressions of the necessity of a cause—that, striking their roots into our moral and intellectual nature, expanding with its developement, and deriving nourishment from every fresh accession of experience and knowledge—constitute the original elements of the conception of the Deity, in the most exalted and purified human intellect. Every fresh act of obedience, every added light of revelation, invests the conception of this moral Governor with higher and holier attributes, and brings him more and more intimately into connexion with the creatures he has made. Every investigation of nature, every discovery in physics, furnishes new proofs of the skill and power of the great First Cause of all. Our notions of time and of space, swell into eternity and immensity. We cannot conceive of Him but as self-existing and omnipresent. Whether we extend our researches into the infinity beneath, or into that above us, every new and more powerful instrument of observation reveals new wonders, that multiply as we proceed, until the mind, overwhelmed by the prodigality of power, displayed in the infinitely minute no less than the infinitely vast of the scene which is unveiled—exhausted in the vain attempt to penetrate the mystery that shrouds from our gaze the great Uncaused Cause—shrinks back abashed and subdued into the consciousness of its own insignificancy.

Before attempting to examine the origin of these impressions of right and wrong, I must recall your attention to the supposed example of a human being endowed with only a single sense. There can be no doubt, that all by which he could distinguish the sensation from his other feelings and thoughts, would be its characteristic peculiarities—the experience that it was felt and that it ceased to be felt, from causes entirely independent of himself, and altogether unconnected with any previous train of thought. Such, precisely, is the case with these impressions. There is nothing in the impulses and desires of our nature in

which they could originate. They constitute a new and altogether peculiar feeling. They arrest our minds suddenly, forcibly, without any agency or control of ours. They disclose to us a new motive to action—a new rule of conduct; the possession of a new sense—the sense of duty. And so strongly has this been felt, that the term “moral sense” has been applied, by common consent, to designate the faculty by which we become acquainted with right and wrong in actions.

A more interesting point of inquiry remains to be investigated. Each of our senses has its appropriate object; the faculty of sight was given us, that we might be sensible of light, and that of hearing, for the perception of sound. How then is this sense of duty informed? Duty is that course of action, and that frame of mind which the Creator has appointed as proper to man. It is therefore a mere relation—and all relations are judged by that to which they refer. Of the relations of bodies to the senses, we are informed by our senses themselves. Of the relations of our thoughts and conceptions to each other, we are informed by the faculty of reason. How, but from the Creator himself, is it possible for us to gain any knowledge of our relations to him? It must be He himself, therefore, who vouchsafes their communication, and who has placed within us this “moral sense,” as the faculty through which, by the agency of his Holy Spirit, he makes known his will.

And why should it not be so? The omnipresent Author of the universe sustains continually—at every moment and in every place—the works of his hands; and guides the planets in their paths—balancing together suns and systems, at the same moment that he cares for the life and provides for the sustenance of creatures so minute that the smallest portion of space which the naked eye can discern, contains its myriads. Shall he not then guide the course and inform the moral nature of that being who is the crown of all this visible creation? Every exertion of his power is appropriate to the end in view. He governs unconscious matter by the laws of attraction and repulsion—the animal creation, by the impulses of instinct and desire—his

rational and accountable creature, by revealing, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the law of duty to the moral sense.

It is no argument against the reality of this immediate communication of the Divine will, that it is not accompanied by an overpowering and miraculous certainty. Were we endowed with but a single bodily sense, our knowledge of the existence and properties of the external world, would be no clearer than that which mankind in general possesses of the spiritual and unseen; although the impression upon the appropriate organ of sense would be not less real and distinct than it is now.

Neither must you be so unphilosophical as to suppose, that the view which has been given you of that Divine Light which reveals to us our duty, supposes it to be any part of our constitution, or any natural power that we can exercise and improve at will. There is, in this respect, a strong analogy between it and the physical light that impresses the bodily organ. We can conceive ourselves to be placed in total darkness; we can conceive of every intermediate degree of light, between it and the dim twilight in which nothing more than the dark and colourless outline of great masses is visible; and the full blaze of noonday, resplendent with beautiful and gorgeous colours, and distinct even to the most delicate pencilling of the minutest object. In each of these cases we feel that the degree of light, and with it our extent of perception, is dispensed by the Great Author of nature, according to the laws by which he regulates the natural world.

It is thus with the intimations of duty, that the Holy Spirit vouchsafes to the mind. They are more or less frequent and distinct, according to the Supreme will, and vary in the course of his moral dispensations, according to the laws by which he regulates the moral world, in the same manner as light does in the physical. In both cases the degree of illumination enjoyed is a matter of experience, and not of theory.

Every faculty of the mind has its appropriate function; on the due fulfilment of which depend its health and vigour. Activity is the condition of the health of the mental, no less than of the bodily frame. How vast is the difference between the

well disciplined and constantly exercised intellect, and the rude uncultivated mind! between the ear taught to discriminate the nicest modulations of sound, or the eye skilled in detecting the slightest shades of colour, and the unpractised organ! It is thus with the sense of duty. Its appropriate function is to compel obedience—an obedience to the intimations which it receives—that confers upon it the supremacy over all our faculties and desires. If these intimations be not obeyed, the sense becomes blunted, and we are less and less susceptible to the Divine impressions. On the other hand, obedience increases sensibility—produces the frame of mind in which the still small voice can be distinctly heard—and widens the range, while it increases the acuteness of our spiritual perceptions, until the law of duty and of religion becomes the supreme law of the moral Being.

In the original condition of man—before he had forfeited his high privileges by disobedience, he walked with his Maker in obedience to the communication of the Divine will, revealed to the moral sense, as we walk by the sight of the eye;—he enjoyed a full communion with his Creator, who graciously deigned to be his spiritual guide and leader:

The investigation of the cause and character of our altered condition belongs to another part of this inquiry. What I wish to insist upon here, is, that as the knowledge of duty and of moral truth could never be elicited by any process of the intellect, from the facts furnished by the bodily senses, nor from any of the instinctive principles and desires of our nature, there is a manifest necessity for some other origin of the data on which it is founded. I wish to impress upon you, that all which the reasoning faculty can do, is to compare the ultimate facts furnished to it; and that its inferences in any given case must, therefore, be of the same kind or class as the data from which they were drawn.

All our knowledge is in fact founded on revelation. It is no irreverence to say that the Almighty has revealed to us the visible and material world—the phenomena and laws of nature, *through the medium of sensation and by the agency of the*

bodily structure, in the same manner as he has revealed to us the unseen and the spiritual world—the law of duty and religion, through the medium of the moral sense and by the illuminations of his Holy Spirit.

The only proper office of the understanding being to compare and generalize the facts discovered by us, whenever we leave the sure ground of observation and research, we entangle ourselves in the mazes of a false and visionary philosophy.

It is so in morals. Whatever an individual has experienced, becomes, so far as memory and knowledge are concerned, his own. The peculiar feeling of right and wrong in actions, of which the Holy Spirit has made every accountable creature more or less frequently, in a greater or less degree, sensible, can seldom, if ever, be wholly eradicated from the memory and the consciousness.

The sense of duty and the consciousness of right and wrong, thus awakened in every child, become blended with the instructions received from those whom he is taught to reverence and obey. On this stock become grafted the prejudices, the opinions and the superstitions of the times. The feeling of right and wrong, transferred by a common law of our nature, from its original and peculiar objects, to these secondary and accidentally associated ones, pervades them all. We observe too, as in the other cases of transferred principles—the love of money, for example—that the sense of duty, when thus perverted from its proper objects, acquires a morbid character, and becomes capable, by the aid of its newly associated passions, of acts and opinions directly contradictory to, and altogether subversive of its original design.

The systems of morals which men thus build up, on the foundation furnished by Divine revelation, must vary, as philosophical theories vary, according to the number and importance of the data employed—to the fidelity with which the facts are represented, and to the accuracy of the deductions which are made from them. So far as these systems influence individual conduct, by motives superior to the dictates of interest and the prejudices of education, they derive their influence from that

compelling power of the moral sense, to which we give the name of *conscience*. We are thus enabled to trace to their source these varying and often conflicting sentiments in morals, which possess the common property of compelling obedience, and which in some cases appear, at a superficial glance, to possess no other property in common.

Were the early intimations to the moral sense implicitly obeyed, there seems, as I have before remarked, to be every reason—drawn from the analogy of the other parts of our constitution—to believe that our perception of them would be quickened, and that the Holy Spirit, who is the ever-present guide and instructor of men, would vouchsafe more and more frequently to make manifest his will.

In conducting this investigation we must bear constantly in mind, the strong analogy which holds between this revelation of the Divine will to the moral sense, and the revelation of the external world to a single unassisted sense. The mental impressions are in both cases peculiar, and altogether independent of the will. In neither case could the information they communicate be derived, either originally or by inference and reasoning, from any other part of our constitution. In both cases, although the mental impression be distinct and unequivocal, there is the same mystery attending its cause and origin—a mystery which, in the one case, can only be cleared up by subsequent experience and comparison of evidence, and in the other, by new revelations from the same Divine source.

Has then this mystery been in fact dissipated? Are we in possession—have we access to an extent of spiritual knowledge, of which the degree of light possessed by the world at large, gives no intimation,—in the same manner, as beneath the dim shadows of twilight, we should forever remain ignorant of the beauties of creation that luxuriate on every side? The answer to these questions must be derived from the survey of the moral condition and history of our race.

To whatever quarter of the globe we turn—whatever page of its annals we explore, we are forced to confess, that, with a *single* exception, we see but faint indications of the Divine

illumination which has been referred to. Of individual examples of exalted virtue—of momentary bursts of pure and lofty emotions from the hearts of a united people, there are enough to excite our deepest sympathies and warmest admiration. But they are like lights that illuminate a wide sea of desolation—perpetually tossing with the stormy and destructive passions. The nations that have risen like the mountain-billows of that ocean—and been lifted, as it seemed, to the skies—have sunk, when their brief career was accomplished, into the common mass of waters, and left no trace of their course, save the wrecks they have cast upon the shores of time. The most refined civilization of the ancient world, served no other purpose than to increase the physical comforts, to sharpen the intellectual faculties and to minister to the gratifications of sense. There was no virtue in it, to raise the nations from the depths of corruption and sensuality into which they were sunk; and we are forced to the melancholy confession, that the perceptions of the moral sense had become so blunted, and its functions so perverted, that it seemed no longer to answer the end for which it had been bestowed.

This, of all moral problems, is the most inexplicable to the unassisted faculties. To whatever part of the creation we turn, we find new proofs of the wisdom of the Deity, and of the beneficent arrangements of his providence. Why is it that man forms the only jarring string in this lofty concord—that he alone presents a moral wreck, where everything else is good and complete?

The answer to these questions is to be found in the pages of history. Reverting to the past, we perceive amidst the nations that have risen from the multitudinous deep, but to disappear again beneath it—a single race—the great land-mark of all succeeding times, whose history seems to be identified, through the long succession of ages, with the destinies of mankind.—This people was in possession, from the beginning of its annals, of the knowledge, and was devoted to the worship of the true God. It preserved the flame of a holy religion, in times when

the surrounding nations were wrapped in the darkness of idolatry and superstition, and sunk in licentiousness and sensuality. The account which it has handed down to us of the history of mankind, states, that man being created perfect and designed for immortality, was placed by his Maker in a state of happiness, which he retained until he lost it by disobedience to the revealed will of his Creator. Having thus forfeited his high privileges, the light of the Divine presence was so far withdrawn from the race, as to leave mankind in a great measure to the consequences of disobedience—to the dominion of the merely sensual and animal propensities.

Yet was it not wholly withdrawn. The Almighty never left himself without a witness in the heart of every accountable and rational being, to his authority as a moral Judge, and to the purity of his moral law—a witness and a guide, of power—if listened unto and followed—to make wise unto salvation, even amidst great intellectual darkness. The history of the world affords ample evidence of this, in the exemplary lives of those eminent Heathens, who seem to have been raised up by Providence as proofs that man was left without excuse for moral blindness and depravity, and in the just and elevated sentiments which the writings of the philosophers contain—sentiments which could never have originated, and the truth of which could never have been felt in the heart, but through the illuminations of the Holy Spirit.

At the same time that the annals of this favoured people inform us of the catastrophe which has overwhelmed our race, they hold out the clearest promises and declarations, that it was ultimately to be rescued from its fallen condition. They contain a series of prophecies relating mainly to this restoration, in which predictions of the one great event are so mingled with the foreshadowing of coming and soon realized calamities upon the surrounding nations, that they were sustained even before they were fulfilled, by all the force of the strongest historical testimony. In the fulness of time—at the very period—in the very place—under the very circumstances foretold—appeared

a Being, who announced himself as the promised Deliverer.—He confirmed his claims to this title, by the undoubted exercise of supernatural power—by healing the sick and raising the dead—by controlling the course of nature and penetrating the secret thoughts of men. The benignity, the purity, and the grandeur of his character, corresponded with the majesty of his power. He completed the purposes of his mission, by meekly submitting to the rage of his persecutors and suffering the death of the vilest malefactor. Yet the grave could not contain him—and the last was the most mysterious and awful act of his career on earth. He rose from the dead, and ascended up into heaven in glory, before the face of his disciples.

The truth of all the portions of the history contained in these annals, is so intimately interwoven together, that we cannot reject any one part, without rejecting the whole; and we cannot reject the whole, without utterly disregarding all those principles of evidence which are the very elements of our most familiar knowledge.

Who, then, was this wonderful Deliverer? His own account of himself must be true; for the impossibility of its falsehood is proved by the supernatural power that attested the reality of his claims. He declared that he was the promised Messiah—that he had existed in glory with the Father before the world was—and that he was one with the Father. He received from his followers the worship due only to the Divinity—he exercised, in the forgiveness of sins, no less than in his perfect mastery over the elements, the highest attributes of Almighty Power. He was the Word that was in the beginning, that was with God, that was God, and that became flesh.

But what were the means by which that deliverance was to be accomplished? Upon this point also must his own declarations inform us. He came, according to them, to offer up his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, that whosoever should believe on him might be saved. Man is to be reconciled to the Father through his mediation, and to receive the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit through him.

The facts to which these mysterious annunciations refer, can be regarded in no other light than as ultimate facts in the spiritual world. The intellect is no more capable of comprehending them—is no more a proper tribunal at which to try them, than it is in the case of those ultimate facts in physics which form the foundation of our knowledge. Truths of all kinds can be conveyed from one individual to another, only by the medium of words; and therefore, no proposition can be framed, which the understanding, in a certain sense, cannot comprehend, and of the truth of which it is not, in that sense, a judge. It is thus that a man, blind from his birth, can form some notion of the science of optics, and may be made to understand its theory. But nothing short of the restoration of his sight—the gift of the faculty, can convey to him any sort of conception of the vivid realities—the beauty and magnificence of the visible creation, or put him in possession of the means of verifying the data upon which optical theories rest.

It is even so with these Sacred Truths. There may be a perfect conviction of the accuracy of all parts of this wonderful history—the understanding may perceive the great condescension of the Redeemer to man, and may comprehend the new relations in which these discoveries in the spiritual world place mankind: but until the Holy Spirit touches the mind with a *sense* of these surpassing mercies, and reveals to it, and quickens it to *feel the duties* which they impose on all who are brought acquainted with them, we cannot be said to have any proper conception of Christianity, or to have attained to a true and saving knowledge of the Gospel.

I have said before, that when rightly viewed, there is a striking analogy between our knowledge of the spiritual and of the physical world. The most uneducated of human beings has some knowledge of numbers; and in every step of the process, from the simple computation of an hundred, up to the sublimest investigations of the analysis, there is a constant appeal to the same class of ultimate facts, the slightest deviation from which, would vitiate the result. The rude Chaldean shepherd that first

marked "the five wandering fires that move in mystic dance," and the modern, whose aided vision can descry planets invisible to the naked eye, make use of the same faculty in their observations; and although the powers of perception in the latter are so wonderfully increased by the aid of instruments, he does not for a moment doubt that the evidence on which his knowledge rests, is of the same kind precisely as that of the unassisted sense. The difference between the attainments of the rude peasant, or the Chaldean shepherd, and those of a Newton or a Herschell, is not greater than exists between the spiritual knowledge of the most enlightened Heathen, and that of a true disciple of the Redeemer. As all correct knowledge in physics is gained by patient observation—by the accuracy with which we watch the course of nature, so is all true spiritual knowledge, both of the Heathen and the Christian, obtained through obedience to the law of duty, revealed to the moral sense by the immediate manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

The philosopher, by the aid of improved means of research, greatly augments the knowledge and power of the species. In the spiritual world, we experience an analogous increase of moral power, not through any means that we have invented, but through the discoveries of Divine mercy revealed to us in the Gospel. Still, in the most advanced stage of spiritual growth, our duty is the same as in its earliest and rudest state; and that duty is obedience. For Christianity is eminently a rule of conduct; and we must ever bear in mind, that the object of the mission of the Redeemer was to restore the forfeited privileges of the race—to accomplish such a change in its fallen condition, as should destroy the ascendancy of the sensual and animal nature, and subject the whole man to the dominion of duty, with the sense enlarged in its range by the revelations of the Gospel, and quickened and strengthened by more powerful visitations of the Holy Spirit, which the Saviour promised should be the guide and comforter of his disciples to the end of the world.

We should greatly err in supposing that the knowledge of

Christian duty, as a theory and a system which may be framed from the data furnished in the Scripture, can ever supersede the necessity of the Holy Spirit, as the guide of life. For, as the highest attainments in science but bind the philosopher down the more strictly to his duties as the interpreter of nature, and render him the more watchful of her most delicate changes,—so must every compliance with fresh impressions of duty, but make the Christian more dependant upon, and attentive to the augmenting light of the Divine presence.

This spirit of unquestioning submission to the evidence of revelation, which philosophy and religion inculcate, is a humble and sincere and inquiring spirit. Placing its safety in watchfulness, and its strength in obedience, it is the spirit of all others the farthest removed from vain-glory and self-confidence—from enthusiasm and fanaticism. While it teaches us that saving knowledge is the daughter of obedience, and that the great duties and doctrines of the Gospel are sealed upon our conscience, through the concurrent manifestations of the Holy Spirit to our minds,—it never for a moment doubts the reality or the awful importance of those truths, to the experimental knowledge of which it has not attained, or which are wrapped in inscrutable mystery; but meekly pursues its course—strong in the confidence that to the sincere inquirer and humble doer, all things necessary to salvation will in due time be unfolded.

Such, if I rightly apprehend them, is a faithful statement of the results of a strict analysis of the origin and nature of the moral sense.

This is not the place, and it would not become me to attempt to unfold the whole scheme of Christian doctrine as revealed to us in the Scriptures—to speak of those awful mysteries of redemption, which relate to the Father and the Son—of the nature of the efficacy of the one great sacrifice, or of those other gifts and graces of the Spirit which may be truly regarded as so many spiritual senses, that reveal to us, even in this life and beneath the veil of flesh, a foretaste of the faculties of the disembodied soul. My object has been, to call your atten-

tion to the only foundation of availing knowledge in morals and religion, and to point out to you another of those impressive analogies between the government of the Almighty in the spiritual and the moral world, which the great work of Bishop Butler first taught us to explore.

If the view which I have taken of the moral sense be correct, it must have been Divinely awakened in every individual of mankind. Some may esteem these impressions to be a part of their ordinary trains of thought, and be startled at the idea of their Divine origin. But their nature is not changed, because we do not recognize it; neither will the rewards of obedience be withheld, because we err as to the sources of our knowledge. It is so with the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. Men may live up to what they know of faith and duty, and differ widely as to their understanding of doctrines which they have not experimentally known; as they may also differ in their mode of enunciating truths, respecting which they in fact agree, because these truths are the objects of experience, and they have realized them.

No one imbued with the spirit of the inductive philosophy, can ever be disposed to underrate the value of a just theory; for it enables us to anticipate experience, and embraces in one luminous and comprehensive view, the whole multitude of individual facts which it comprises. Of the same nature—but of infinitely greater importance, because the interests to which it relates are those of the spirit and eternal—is the value of sound opinions in religion. Yet, as in physics, the only solid base on which they can rest, is that of experimental knowledge; and one of the first truths which a just theory teaches, is the practical worthlessness of all systems of morals, which are not a faithful expression of the revealed will of the Father of spirits.

If in this view of our spiritual relations, morality takes the higher name of religion, and they become identified, philosophy humbles herself into obedience, and seeks only to know the revelation of the Supreme will.

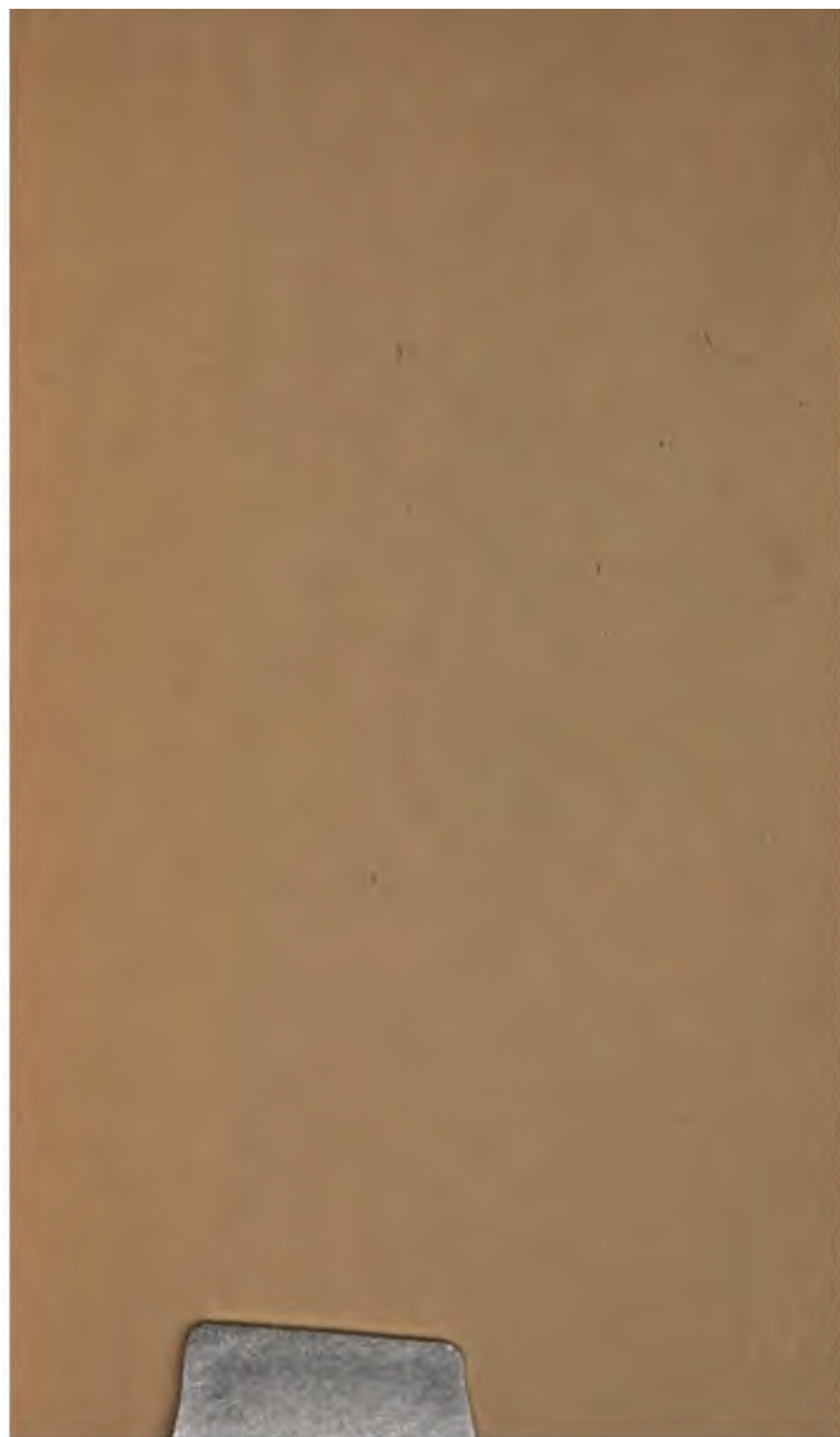
May their meek and Divine spirit sink deep into your hearts!

May you go forth into the world beneath its canopy! It will allay the fever of youthful ambition. It will quiet the disturbance of the unholy passions. And, although "the troublous storms that toss the private state, and render life unsweet," may assail you, it will ride the agitated waves—a halcyon bird of calm. It will raise your thoughts above the bounded horizon of the present world, and fix them in calm assurance upon the perpetual serenity of the life which is to come.

THE END.







An inquiry into the nature and func
Widener Library 003629930



3 2044 081 824 021